feeding on bee-wax near Gangharia village *c.* 9000 ft, on the Govindghat—Valley of Flowers bridle path, on 23 July 1978. Four active beehives and several old broken combs were situated on an overhang of a rocky slope close to the bridle path. Three birds were noted frequenting the site of feed on that occasion. On subsequent observations I could spot the territorial male from other birds that frequently visited to feed on the wax. From the behaviour of the birds it was apparent that the breeding season was still on. The habitat around the site consists mainly of stands of Deodar (*Cedrus deodara*), *Rhododendron* sp., and *Quercus* sp.

According to available literature the population in this part of the Himalayas is *radcliffi*. However, this subspecies is described from a single specimen and since the first description no specimen has been collected. Sálim Ali & Ripley (1970) mention Hugh Whistler seeing this bird on 24 April 1923 at Truin, Dharmasala, *c.* 2900 m and consider it as the last authentic record. Friedmann (1974) mentions Walter Koelz's collection in 1940's of several specimens of Honeyguides from Garhwal (exact localily not specified). Koelz noticed them feeding on exposed bee combs and several of the birds collected had beeswax in their gizzards.

The evidence gathered recently indicates that this species is not so rare as it is made out to be and therefore it should be possible to obtain more data of biology and ecology of this unique bird.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,
HORNBILL HOUSE,
BOMBAY 400 023,
August 25, 1978.

S. A. HUSSAIN

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12. SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE WARBLER (AVES: SYLVINAE) POPULATIONS OF THE UPLAND PERENNIAL WETLANDS IN THE EASTERN GHATS

There is an extensive perennially wet area (at least 300 sq miles) mainly in the Paderu taluk (*c.* 17°57'N, 82°40'E), Vishakapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh. The area is at about 3500 ft m.s.l. with hills rising up to 5000 ft. The habitat consists of (1) Paddy fields (two crops per year), (2) several acres of mature forest around each village, (3) regenerating scrub and woodland along the hillsides where shifting cultivation is practised, (4) grassy hill tops.

This area has not been ornithologically sur-

veyed before and there are several species of birds, e.g. a partridge, quail and red Munia (*Estrida amandava*) which are not found at lower, drier altitudes, the ghats (i.e. on the Chintapalle plateau) (Price, *in prep.*). Some species are held in common with the coastal plains while others are confined to this area. Particular attention was paid to the Warblers (Sylviinae) and here I detail the complete list noted in two visits to Locheli, about 15 miles south of Paderu on 6th May and 25 June 1977. Unfortunately adverse weather conditions prevented successful trapping of the birds.

INDIAN PALEFOOTED BUSH WARBLER (*Cettia pallidipes*):

Known previously in the Eastern Ghats from only one specimen (Whistler & Kinnear 1933), this bird is extremely common in the better wooded areas. Males were in song on both occasions, more so in May. Birds were twice heard along water courses on the Chintapalle plateau, both near to the Paderu plateau and it is likely that they had spread from there.

STREAKED FANTAIL WARBLER (*Cisticola juncidis*)

Abundant on the paddy fields.

FRANKLIN'S WREN WARBLER (*Prinia hodgsonii*)

Uncommon in the thicker more advanced regenerating growth.

PLAIN WREN WARBLER (*Prinia subflava*)

Found around the periphery of the paddy-fields. This species and *C. juncidis* are the common resident warblers of the coastal plain. During my only visit to the plains, both species were noted near Vizianagram on 2nd August 1977. They were much less common than at Lacheli, possibly because the area is not under wet cultivation throughout the year. *P. subflava* was not seen on the Chintapalle plateau. *C. juncidis* was recorded occasionally and probably breeds in very low numbers.

JUNGLE WREN WARBLER (*Prinia sylvatica*)

Common on the drier slopes right up to the hill tops. The territories of this and *P. subflava* abut (with no overlap) possibly reflecting the abrupt change from wet areas to those on the slopes that are well drained and with poor soil. They are extremely difficult to separate by plumage although *P. subflava* is notably smaller. All birds were in song and this was the best identification character.

TAILOR BIRD (*Orthotomus sutorius*)

A few pairs around every village. This bird, *P. hodgsonii* and *P. sylvatica* are all represented on the Chintapalle plateau (e.g. at Lamasinghi, Price, *in prep.*) in similar habitat to that at Locheli. This means that *P. sylvatica* is less common and the other two species more common at Lamasinghi. The Ashy Wren Warbler (*Prinia socialis*) is the commonest wren warbler at Lamasinghi and although a few pairs extend up to the Paderu plateau, it is totally absent at Locheli. This presumably reflects the absence of sufficient lush regenerating growth as is found on the Chintapalle plateau.

BROADTAILED GRASS WARBLER (*Schoenicola platyura*)

A pair seen near the village of Chinagada (26 June 1977) in and around thick grass and bush cover above a paddy field. Apart from one specimen, probably a straggler, at Point Calimere, Tamil Nadu (Hussain 1977), this species was only previously known from the southern Western Ghats (Ali & Ripley 1973). The male was watched for over half-an-hour, constantly repeating a five to ten second song, mostly in display flight but also from perch. Description taken at the time: Upper parts uniform warm brown. Under parts white,

throat conspicuous against the ochraceous breast. Tail darker underneath, strongly graduated, finely cross rayed. Bill and eye black. Song: a twittering almost goldfinch-like, ending with a tit like call. Also 'pinks' from a perch at times. The birds were breeding but no nest could be found. I later examined the specimens in the Bombay Natural History Society collection and am convinced of its identification.

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TREVOR PRICE

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13. FAECAL FEEDING IN THE WHITEHEADED BABBLER, *TURDOIDES AFFINIS* (JERDON)—A REJOINDER

This is to draw attention to Mr. D. E. J. Jeyasingh's note in Vol. 73, No. 1 of the *Journal* (page 218) on the above subject.

Mr. Jeyasingh writes on the Whiteheaded Babbler swallowing the faecal sacs of its young and questions the normally held view that this involves nest sanitation. He suggests "an alternate line of reasoning". According to him, the faecal sac has some nutritional value for the parents.

Without getting into any controversy on the subject, I would like to place on record my own observations. I have had occasion to watch several species of birds at close quarters while photographing them on their nests. A pity it never occurred to me to keep records of the number of times a parent bird swallowed the faecal sacs and the number of times it carried them away. The impression I have gained, however, is that while some birds do swallow the packets, the majority carry them away.

Redvented Bulbuls tended to swallow the sacs particularly when the chicks were newly hatched as also did the Yelloweyed Babblers watched by me. My impression is that this was in response to the parents not wanting to leave the newly hatched young exposed and as the chicks grew a little larger, the sacs were carried away. Marshal's Ioras, Small Minivets, Whitebellied Minivets, Jungle Wren-Warblers, Rufousfronted Wren-Warblers, Franklin's Wren-Warblers, Tailorbirds and Purple Sunbirds were not seen to swallow the packets. The faecal packet was invariably carried away by Indian Robins and Rufouswinged Bush Larks.

It is interesting to note that while the cocks